Rep. Pike Sets August Hearings On U.S Intelligence Spending

7/23/75

By George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

The new chairman of the House intelligence committee, anxious to make up for lost time, announced plans yesterday for an immediate inquiry into the cost of maintaining the nation's entire "intelligence community."

Rep. Otis G. Pike (D-N.Y.) said he hopes to hold hearings during the first two weeks of August with testimony from the General Accounting Office and the Office of Management and Budget.

"I think the magnitude of what we're spending to investigate our 'enemies' and each other is a matter the American people ought to know," Pike told reporters after an organizational meeting of the reconstituted 13-member committee yesterday morning.

Pike said he thought the hearings should be public for as long as possible. Formerly a member of the House Armed Services Committee, he has said in the past that he feels U.S. intelligence agencies are gathering "a great deal more intelligence than we can absorb."

Their budgets reportedly total more than $6 billion a year.

Pike said he realized the hearings would ruin the vacation plans of many committee members during the August recess, but he said he felt it important "to make up for lost time."

The original 10-member intelligence committee was created last February, but it was bogged down in a dispute between the Democratic majority on the panel and Chairman Lucien N. Nedzi (D-Mich.). The House reorganized the committee into a 13-member panel last week and Speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.) named Pike to replace Nedzi, who is not on the new committee.

Most of the other members of the original committee were reappointed, but one of them, Rep. Don Edwards (D-Calif.), submitted his resignation yesterday, pleading the press of his duties as chairman of a House Judiciary subcommittee. The Speaker immediately named Rep. William Lehman (D-Fla) to fill the vacancy.

The newly assigned Lehman walked into the committee meeting just in time to learn that his vacation was going out of the window.

"Two weeks in Washington instead of Alaska," he mused unhappily after the meeting. "My wife'll kill me."

The House committee also approved strict security regulations and a staff employment agreement designed to keep classified information secret. Rep. Philip H. Hayes (D-Ind.) suggested appointment of a public information officer to handle inquiries, but Pike squelched the idea.

"It sounds too much as if we're in the busines of putting out headlines, and we're not," Pike declared. He said he did not want anyone on the committee staff to talk to the press.

At a Monday afternoon meeting with Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho), the chairman of the Senate intelligence committee, Pike said, the two agreed to coordinate investigations in hopes of avoiding repetition and also to share information. As a result, Pike said the House committee will concentrate first on spending for intelligence and will leave the issue of Central Intelligence Agency invovement in assassination schemes largely to the Church committee.

Continuing its assassination inquiry in closed session, the Senate committee heard testimony yesterday from George McManus, a retired CIA official who worked closely with former agency director Richard Helms, and from Richard Bissell, former chief of the CIA's clandestine services.